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Report of the Economic and Social Council

United Nations Population Award

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund on the United Nations Population Award, established by the Assembly in its resolution 36/201 of 17 December 1981. The report, which covers 1998, was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1982/112 of 26 April 1982.

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Annex

Report on the United Nations Population Award (1998)

I. Introduction

1. On 17 December 1981, the General Assembly adopted resolution 36/201, entitled "Establishment of the United Nations Population Award". The Award is presented annually to an individual or individuals, to an institution or institutions, or to any combination thereof for the most outstanding contribution to increasing awareness of population questions or to finding solutions to them.

2. The laureate is selected by the Committee for the United Nations Population Award, which is composed of representatives of 10 Member States of the United Nations elected by the Economic and Social Council for a period of three years.

3. In 1997–1998, the Economic and Social Council selected the following nine countries to serve on the Committee for a period of three years beginning in January 1998: Cape Verde, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lesotho, Netherlands, Romania and Thailand. No candidate has yet been proposed by the concerned regional group for the vacant tenth seat. The Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) serve as ex officio members. The Executive Director also acts as Secretary of the Committee. The Award consists of a diploma, a gold medal and a monetary prize.

4. On 5 December 1986, by its decision 41/445, the General Assembly amended article 2, paragraph 1, of the annex to resolution 36/201 so that an individual and an institution could share the Award.

5. On 26 May 1987, by its decision 1987/129, the Economic and Social Council amended the rules of procedure of the Committee for the Population Award accordingly.

6. In March 1998, the Committee re-elected Mr. Julio Armando Martini Herrera (Guatemala) Chairman.

7. The following five eminent individuals served as honorary members of the Committee in an advisory capacity: Ms. Robin Chandler Duke, Chairperson, Population Action International; Mr. Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, former president of Mexico; Mr. Dirk van der Kaa of the Netherlands; Ms. Shidzue Kato of Japan; and Ms. Victoria Sekitoleko, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries of Uganda.

II. The 1998 United Nations Population Award

8. A total of 28 nominations were received for the 1998 United Nations Population Award from qualified nominators. Of these, 19 were for the "individual" category and nine for the "institutional" category. In June 1998, within the mandate given to it by the General Assembly, and after a thorough review of the nominations, the Committee selected Professor H. H. Wynter of Jamaica in the "individual" category and the Sabiny Elders Association of Uganda in the "institutional", as the laureates for 1998.

9. During the course of the selection process, the Committee also examined some proposals for further broadening the selection pool, with a view to making it more comprehensive and reflective of the work being undertaken in the field. Those proposals are still under review in the Committee.

10. Professor Hugh H. Wynter, Chairman of the National Family Planning Board of Jamaica, was nominated for his work in promoting safe and effective family planning, both in the private sector and in government policy. As a professor of obstetrics and gynaecology and Director of the Regional Caribbean programme entitled Advanced Training and Research in Fertility Management Programme, at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, Professor Wynter has trained many medical doctors in the region. He is credited as being one of the most influential people in assisting his country to achieve one of the lowest rates of population growth, fertility and infant mortality in the region and other countries in the region with their family planning programmes. Jamaica has achieved great progress in population and health issues and has the highest level of contraceptive use. Professor Wynter is a widely respected leader in the Caribbean region, and his work has had a significant impact at both the national and global levels.

11. The Sabiny Elders Association was nominated primarily for its efforts to curtail the practice of female genital mutilation among the Sabiny community in eastern Uganda. The Association was formed in 1992, bringing together the elders of the 161 Sabiny clans to promote the development of the Sabiny, to preserve its language and its culture along with improving the welfare of the Sabiny people. It has been active in promoting awareness of the human immunodeficiency virus, development of traditional medicine, children's education and environmental conservation. Its most dramatic success has been its participation in the REACH (Reproductive, Educative and Community Health) programme, which substitutes gift-giving and public celebration for the traditional practice of female genital mutilation as "a rite-of-passage" into womanhood. Through its culturally sensitive leadership, the REACH programme has succeeded in reducing female genital mutilation by 36 per cent in 1996. The strategy is being studied for use in other communities where female genital mutilation is still practised.

III. Financial matters

12. As at 1 January 1997, the Trust Fund had a total of $740,124. Income from interest was $44,382. Expenditures in 1997, including the prizes, totalled $47,995. The closing balance as at 31 December 1997 totalled $736,511.